

Message Text

SECRET

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AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY
INFO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 219662 TOSEC 260053

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, GR, TU

SUBJECT: AEGEAN DISPUTE

REF: STATE 217764

1. UNDER SECRETARY HABIB CALLED IN TURKISH AMBASSADOR ESENBEL SEPTEMBER 3 TO FOLLOW UP ORAL MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY TO FOREIGN MINISTER CAGLAYANGIL CONCERNING NEW SISMIL SAILINGS (REFTEL). HABIB EMPHASIZED USG CONCERN THAT THE FRUITS OF THE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN NEW YORK IN LATE AUGUST WERE IN DANGER OF BEING LOST. HE NOTED THAT THE GREEKS HAD ACCEPTED THE CONCEPT OF RESOLVING MAJOR AEGEAN PROBLEMS THROUGH DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS -- A KEY TURKISH OBJECTIVE. ALTHOUGH NEITHER PARTY LEFT NEW YORK COMPLETELY SATISFIED, AND WHILE MANY ISSUES WERE NOT RESOLVED, NONETHELESS OUR EXPECTATION WAS THAT NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BEGIN SHORTLY, AND THAT THROUGH THIS PROCESS A RESOLUTION OF ISSUES COULD BEGIN.

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INSTEAD, THERE HAS BEEN NO MOVEMENT TOWARD INITIATING TALKS,

AND THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT HAD NOW ANNOUNCED A NEW PROGRAM OF SAILINGS WHICH WOULD TAKE THE SISMİK INTO SOME OF THE MOST SENSITIVE AREAS IN THE AEGEAN.

2. ESENBEL'S RESPONSE WAS THAT TURKEY WAS READY TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS DESPITE ITS CONTINUING SUSPICIONS OF GREEK

MOTIVES. AS FOR THE SISMİK'S SAILING PROGRAM, ESENBEL SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS WITH CAGLAYANGIL IN NEW YORK AND COULD STATE WITH CERTAINTY THAT CHANGES IN THE AREA OF OPERATION OF THE VESSEL WERE NEVER CONTEMPLATED EVEN IF THE TURKS HAD GOTTEN WHAT THEY WANTED IN NEW YORK. ESENBEL ADDED, AS IF INDICATING A CONCESSION, THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THIS WOULD BE THE LAST PHASE OF THE SISMİK'S OPERATION FOR 1976.

3. HABIB NOTED THAT AMBASSADOR MACOMBER HAD SPOKEN TO FOREIGN MINISTER CAGLAYANGIL ON WEDNESDAY AND HAD MADE CLEAR OUR HOPE THAT THE SCHEDULE OF THE SISMİK COULD BE CHANGED SUFFICIENTLY TO AVOID EXACERBATING THE SITUATION. THE CURRENT SCHEDULE CALLED FOR OPERATIONS THROUGH SEPTEMBER 25. THIS WOULD INVOLVE THREE WEEKS OF HIGH TENSION. THE US HAD ASSUMED THERE WOULD BE A COOLING-OFF PERIOD FOLLOWING THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL DELIBERATIONS IN NEW YORK, A COOLING-OFF PERIOD WHICH WOULD HAVE FACILITATED BILATERAL TALKS. NOW THE TALKS WERE BEING PUT OFF AND WE HAD RECEIVED NO REAL INDICATION FROM EITHER SIDE THAT PLANNING FOR SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS HAD BEGUN.

4. HABIB TOLD ESENBEL THAT WHEN AMBASSADOR MACOMBER HAD CONVEYED THE SECRETARY'S ORAL MESSAGE TO CAGLAYANGIL, THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD SAID HE WOULD REVIEW THE SISMİK'S FUTURE ROUTE AND "DO THE BEST I CAN." HABIB ASKED ESENBEL TO REINFORCE MACOMBER'S PRESENTATION AND TO INTERPRET FOR HIS OWN GOVERNMENT THE UNFAVORABLE REACTION IF THE FRUITS OF NEW YORK WERE SUDDENLY ENDANGERED THROUGH THE OPERATIONS OF THE TURKISH SEISMIC VESSEL.

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5. ESENBEL AGREED TO REPORT HABIB'S REMARKS IMMEDIATELY TO HIS GOVERNMENT AND EXPRESSED HIS VIEW THAT WE COULD DEPEND ON CAGLAYANGIL'S MAKING A SINCERE EFFORT TO DO WHAT HE COULD, AS HE HAD PROMISED MACOMBER. ESENBEL ADDED, HOWEVER, IT WAS AN OPEN QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HIS FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD BE ABLE TO SUCCEED, GIVEN THE DIFFICULT DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION THE TURKISH COALITION FACED.

ROBINSON

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